THE METAPHORICAL INEVITABILITY OF DEATH AS SEEN IN THREE SETTINGS
OF GOETHE'S *DER ERLKÖNIG*

by

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music in Music
Theory at the University of Texas at Arlington

May 2023

Arlington, Texas

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ABSTRACT

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Goethe's *Der Erlkönig*, published in 1791, laid the foundation for many musical settings of its text. The three that will be discussed in this thesis are by Franz Schubert (1815), Carl Loewe (1824), and Emilie Mayer (1870). Each of these three settings evokes the metaphorical concept of inevitability. In Mayer's setting, the harp-like accompaniment pattern that follows the Erlking suggests a calm presence, but the text shows the Erlking's true nature. Loewe's setting is entirely in G (major and minor), which I interpret as two sides of the same coin– the positive false reality that the Erlking provides and the truth of the situation that the father and son are in. In my interpretation, Schubert's setting provides the strongest connection to the inevitable death of the child in the text. I argue that a large-scale Expanded Cadential Progression (first brought to light by Caplin) deep in the tonal structure of this setting provides a progression of inevitability leading to the end of the work. Utilizing Caplin's formal function theory and Schenker's linear analysis and expanding on past research by Burkhart, I intend to further explore the links between the original text and settings of *Der Erlkönig*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper would not have been possible without the guidance of my thesis committee: Dr. Graham Hunt, Dr. Amy Hatch, and Dr. Benjamin Graf. Thank you all for your mentorship, thoughtful commentary, and extraordinary patience. Additionally, I am grateful to all of the professors I have had the pleasure of working with at the University of Texas at Arlington.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Brian and Dina, for their unconditional love and unwavering support.

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Franz Schubert's *Der Erlkönig*, arguably the most well-known setting of Wolfgang

Goethe's 1782 poem of the same name, has retained its stature throughout the ages[1]. Although

other settings by Carl Loewe (1824) and his student Emilie Mayer (1870) exist, Schubert's 1815

arrangement sets the gold standard. He was only eighteen years old at the time he composed it.

Each of the five characters represented in the poem has a distinct voice, due in part to

Schubert's use of a distinct tessitura for each character in the setting for baritone voice and

piano. The father, with the lowest voice of all of Goethe's characters, has the lowest range. The

son and the Erlking both utilize a higher tessitura, with the son's voice rising higher as he panics

while the Erlking pursues him. The narrator, present only at the beginning and end of the setting,

lies just above the father. Rogers speculated that the father's horse could be represented by the

recurring sextuplet motive shown in *Der Erlkönig*[23] (Example 1).

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[1] This poem was part of a larger Singspiel entitled "Die Fischerin".
[2] Schubert, Franz. *Der Erlkönig, Op. 1*. Vienna: Diabelli & Cappi, n.d

[3] Nancy Rogers, "Hearing an Old Story in a New Way: An Analysis of Loewe's 'Erlkönig.'" *Intégral* 30 (2016): 32.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/26358526.

Example 1: The first entrance of the sextuplet motive in the piano part in Schubert's setting of *Der Erlkönig*.

Although the story of *Der Erlkönig* begins with Goethe, its continuation relied heavily on Schubert. Let us consider that even though Goethe did not much care for Schubert's setting, it retained its popularity, soaring above later editions by Loewe and Mayer. In particular, Schubert's ties to the text are stronger than both of the later settings. Various text painting within the many characters enhances the overall imagery, but it transcends mere text setting: Schubert's compositional style aligns more closely with the narrative than others. Even though he wrote more than 600 works and established a distinct compositional voice, he wrote this setting very early in his musical career. Typically, Schubert's works are tonally functional, but do not rely on function for meaning. Therefore, one could argue his music could be considered more romantic in nature around the time that he wrote the setting of *Der Erlkönig*, 1815. In fact, the zeitgeist of the Western compositional world was changing. Things such as functional harmony, where each chord was functionally positioned, spelled, and utilized, was perhaps beginning to erode. The way the harmony and melody brought out key phrases in the text became more prevalent. Primmer notes in "Unity and Ensemble: *Contrasting Ideals in Romantic Music,"* many composers in the Romantic era were in search of themselves.[4] Schubert did not need to look any further in this case than Goethe's text.

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[4] Brian Primmer, "Unity and Ensemble: Contrasting Ideals in Romantic Music," *19th-Century Music* 6, no. 2 (1982): pp. 97-140, https://doi.org/10.2307/746271, 97.

This thesis would not have been possible without the contributions of many theorists and musicologists. Webster's article detailing different possibilities for musicological time periods will help to solidify some of the Romantic ideals that may have shaped how Schubert, Loewe, and Mayer wrote their respective settings. Primmer's discussion on unity will establish a link between music and text that appears to be prominent in all three settings. The relationship between text and music will be further engaged in Kimmel's argument about modal influence in music dealing with death. Unlike the large-scale ECP in the Schubert setting, there are aspects of this music in the foreground that tie into the textual subject matter.

More specifically, the two main areas of analysis that this thesis will deal with are Caplin's formal function theory and Schenker's linear analysis. The expanded cadential progression was first brought to light by Caplin in one of his earlier books and is a key element in foreshadowing the child's death in the text. Much like the concept of the ECP, linear analysis will be used in order to show broader relationships between the text and music. Scholars such as Cadwallader, Pastille, and Ewell will be utilized in order to facilitate further discussions on linear analysis– specifically the motivations behind Schenker's thought processes.

In dealing with the various *Erlkönig* settings, articles by Rogers, Bailey, and Todd will assist with analyzing elements that show the expressive nature of the text. These articles will act as a magnifying glass in order to catch key details that will assist with unraveling the mysteries of the Erlking. Furthering the link to death and the inevitable, an article by Schwarz will contribute to a discussion on associated works such as "Der Atlas," a part of a later song cycle by Schubert.

Indeed, Schubert was a great composer of this era, but so were Loewe and Mayer. Regarding the latter issue, Schubert interacts with the text on multiple levels. In a Schenkerian reading of this setting, there are salient features in the foreground, middleground, and background. In the foreground, the opening motive presents a legend for the map of Schubert's imagination prefigured as a catchy introduction. Burkhart provides insight as to how the piece can be approached linearly; the entire genetic material of the piece is contained within that single motive.[5]

In the middleground structure of the setting, the idiosyncrasies of the different characters shine through in the text painting. For example, the son's rising vocal line, the father's somewhat distant demeanor, and the Erlking's growing malice are all represented through the harmony and vocal lines. I argue that the large-scale structure of this setting evokes an ECP, leading to the inevitability of the death of the child and the return of the tonic key, G minor (Example 3). The opening motive does prefigure the large-scale key areas, but it transcends that: those key areas form a metaphorical progression of inevitability. The destiny of the child is death at the hands of the Erlking, and the structure parallels the poetic idea of the text.

The death of the child, although unavoidable, was more concealed at the beginning of the text. After a brief introduction of the father and son, the text gradually becomes more urgent, corresponding to the increasingly fast approach of the Erlking. Only at the moment that the Erlking reveals his plan to use force on the boy does it become apparent what will happen. Schubert could have followed the text more literally and written in a way that better concealed the Erlking's true nature, but he decided on a more Romantic approach. One could argue that this

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[5] Charles Burkhart and Heinrich Schenker, "Schenker's 'Motivic Parallelisms,'" *Journal of Music Theory* 22, no. 2 (1978): p. 145, https://doi.org/10.2307/843395, 157.

increases the drama inherent in the text. By intensifying the drama, the audience can possibly feel more connected to the narrative unfolding, creating a very important early nineteenth-century link to "the self"— a growing idea in the Romantic era. The idea of unity and linking music to text is more in vogue at this time, but even more, a union of audience to music arises— surpassing Loewe or Mayer. The attributes that Loewe and Mayer bring to their respective settings of *Der Erlkönig* may not reach a symbolic or metaphorical depth as profound as Schubert's, but their stories are nonetheless important.

One unique aspect of Loewe's setting is the way he sets the voices. It is distinctly more active in certain sections, specifically mm. 1–5.[6] The second interval in the vocal line is an augmented second, perhaps hinting that the Erlking is an unnatural presence in the world. Since the setting remains in G (either major or minor), only one pattern becomes apparent in the tonal structure. Even though the global tonic remains the same, the key indeed changes; perhaps signifying that the natural and unnatural in the world are two sides of the same coin. Interestingly, the key of G minor is reserved for the natural (or reality). The key of G major is used by the Erlking in order to make the unnatural (or dream) is the true reality. The final interval skip is a major sixth from D—B, teasing the return of a major tonic chord. The concept of moral ambiguity is reinforced at the end of the setting when a G minor chord immediately follows a G major chord. The final note has no harmonic support—it is only a unison G, perhaps adding to the ambiguous nature of the setting.

The duality or struggle between the natural and supernatural is not foreign to Schubert; consider his *String Quartet No. 14 "Death and the Maiden"* (1824). In the original text by

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[6] Carl Loewe. *3 Balladen, Op. 1.* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1899).

Matthias Claudius, Death attempts to convince the maiden to go with him peacefully. Although she resists, it is inevitable that death will win in the end. Here, the character of Death is portrayed as a gentle figure, calling the maiden a "lovely, tender creature" and saying that "[he] is your friend."[7] This duality in the three settings of *Der Erlkönig* not only corresponds to the harmony, but also to the length that the characters spend singing, indicated here by the number of measures (Example 2). The Erlking has the most vocal lines out of all the characters. In Schubert's setting, the Erlking grows more powerful and/or bold and requires increasingly smaller amounts of time to control the boy. With each entrance, the Erlking sings less and less. The narrator, although he sings almost the same duration as the Erlking, does not experience much of a decline between his two sections at the beginning and end. The Mayer and Schubert settings have the widest range of vocal length. The Loewe setting's characters sing almost for roughly the same amount of time, with each character singing for an average of 20.75 measures throughout the setting.

Schubert

Character	Father	Son	Narrator	Erlking
Total measures sung	19	30	30	32

Loewe

Character	Father	Son	Narrator	Erlking
Total measures sung	20	19	22	22

Mayer

Character	Father	Son	Narrator	Erlking
Total measures sung	19	32	29	26

Example 2: a comparison between the length of time each character spends singing in the three different settings.

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[7] Matthias Claudius, "Der Tod und das Mädchen," Oxford Leider, accessed April 5, 2023. https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/2616

The accompaniment patterns do not change quite as often as those in Schubert's setting do. Almost as though Schubert's focus was on character development, each role is usually tied to a specific accompaniment pattern. In Loewe's arrangement, the accompaniment is made up of mostly tremolos; this does not change much between characters. One notable exception is mm. 76–80, which is a written-out tremolo with added notes. The tremolos could be interpreted as shaking, but since nearly the entire setting utilizes that specific pattern, it seems less intentional.

The Mayer setting features a more varied accompaniment pattern while maintaining a repetitive vocal line for the Erlking.[8] The key changes are similar to the Loewe setting in that the only changes occur between the other characters and the Erlking. Instead of moving from G minor to G major, the tonal motion shifts from D minor to B-flat major. Typically in those instances, the switch is not a key change/modulation, but rather a chordal movement.

Mayer's setting also boasts a definitive ending, much like Schubert's. The text does not leave much to the imagination of the reader, and tonally, the two endings do not. Although the tonality of the ending progression of Loewe's setting is a bit ambiguous, the final goal is certainly clear. Both the Mayer and Loewe settings have miniature codas that continue after the last note is sung. The final 4-3 suspension in the Mayer setting leans into a moment of dissonance before giving way to a minor sonority, perhaps symbolizing the idea that the Erlking is not done yet. The alternating sixteenths in mm. 21–26 are written out and more controlled than the majority of the tremolos seen in the Loewe setting. In these measures where they appear, the father is attempting to calm his son. As a result, they are written out in time. This could be interpreted as the father struggling to conceal his anxiety from his son. The Schubert setting

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[8] Mayer, Emilie. *Der Erlkönig*. CAESURA, 2021.

shows the father as a more calming presence— perhaps better able to hide his true feelings from his son.

Another way in which Mayer uses the vocal lines to mold her artistic ideas is evident in the first and last sung measure of the setting. Both the first and last notes are the same (A—D), with the A starting below the tonic at the beginning and above it at the end. These two pitches could be viewed as bookends, but also as harbingers for the events of the text. Just as the key of G minor is inevitable in the Loewe and Schubert settings, these two pitches are inevitable in Mayer's setting.

The phrygian movement seen throughout Mayer's setting invite more discussion on the use of chords that do not appear diatonically, such as ♭II.[9] Although Mayer chose not to employ the Neapolitan chord, the half step movement from *do—ra* proves salient throughout the composition. In this setting, the use of E-flat in the context of a D minor vocal line offsets different aspects of the piece. The first time it is used in m. 6, the E-flat occurs on the word *spät,* meaning "late," perhaps the narrator's way of emphasizing that the story not only occurs at a late time of day, but also that it is too late to save the child's life, unbeknownst to the father. The following two times that the E-flat is used, it occurs during a change in character; first from the narrator to the father, and then subsequently from the Erlking to the son. One possible reading of this pitch is that it functions as a link between pairs of characters who affect each other negatively. The father, although not aware of the presence of the narrator, is eventually affected more and more by what the narrator has been saying all along. Eventually, the father believes that the Erlking (or *something*) has been harming his son. In addition, as the Erlking's influence

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[9] William Kimmel. "The Phrygian Inflection and the Appearances of Death in Music." *College Music Symposium* 20, no. 2 (1980): 44.

on the son becomes more obvious and affective, the son becomes more distraught and anxious until he dies.

Even though several pertinent aspects of these settings are beneficial here, a brief historical context may prove useful. Wolfgang Goethe wrote the text that Schubert, Loewe, and Mayer set to music, but the idea of the character can be traced to Johann Gottfried von Herder, who named a song after Erlking's daughter. Goethe (who contributed to the song) then took this character and wrote *Der Erlkönig* shortly thereafter.[10] It would be almost two decades before Schubert set the poem to music, but he was not the first. Rogers mentions that many others have written settings of Goethe's poem. Schubert, already a household name by the time he was eighteen, enjoyed more notoriety than his less popular counterparts.

Der Erlkönig tells the tale of a boy and his father being pursued by the mythical Erlking. With no exact translation from German, it can be thought of as the "Alder King." [11] Some have called him the Elf King, but there is a direct translation of that word— *Elfenkönig*. As the Erlking draws closer to the fleeing pair, the boy becomes increasingly anxious. The father attempts to assuage the boy's fear, but the boy dies as they arrive at their destination. The text painting that Schubert uses creates a closer link to the text— a very romantic notion.

The setting starts with an introduction of the "horse" motive. As the father and son gallop toward their home, the omniscient narrator sets the scene. Rather than portray the Erlking's evil through dissonance, the musical surface makes the Erlking seem warm and inviting. In fact, the Erlking's entrances coincide with the prominent key changes— first to B-flat major in m. 55 and to C major in m. 83. In m. 108, the change to D minor appears to change the pattern, but the

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[10] Ibid., 31
[11] Franz Schubert. *Der Erlkönig Op. 1*. (Vienna: Diabelli & Cappi, n.d.), 1.

Erlking boldly enters on the Neapolitan chord (E-flat major), keeping in line with the mostly major harmonies that have supported the villain thus far. At this point in the text, the Erlking has essentially dropped the act and decided to "take the child by force."[12] Immediately after, the child ascends to the highest note in the composition— a G4, and traverses an entire octave in the subsequent three measures. As the child's limp body drops into the father's arms, the music sags metaphorically. The narrator, the voice of inevitability, ends the poem by informing the reader that although the father and son escaped the Erlking's clutches, the boy did not escape with his life. Aside from the Erlking's entrances matching up with key changes, other elements of text painting can be found.

The repeated eighth notes in the right hand of the piano part help to add to the intensity. Sometimes Schubert will outline a diminished triad synchronically, often to illustrate the worry of the child.

CHAPTER TWO: COMPARISON OF TONAL STRUCTURES

The opening motive does more than introduce the piece— it also hints at the overall tonal structure. As shown in Example 3, the main keys that Schubert uses in this setting are G minor, B-flat major, C major, and D minor. Although at first the global tonal plan may seem less relevant, when used in tandem with Caplin's Formal Function Theory, a more nuanced analysis comes into focus.

III	IV	v	i	
G minor	B-flat major	C major	D minor	G minor
mm. 1— 54	mm. 55— 82	mm. 83— 107	mm. 108— 127	mm. 128— 148

Example 3: The tonal structure of Schubert's *Der Erlkönig* with the large-scale ECP on top

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[12] Ibid, 10

According to Caplin, the ECP typically replaces a portion of a phrase type with a cadential progression.[13] For example, instead of a cadential progression taking place at the end of a sentence's continuation, the cadential progression takes over the entire continuation. An example of an ECP can be seen in Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Op. 31, No. 3.*[14] The opening is a non-conventional theme type that follows a chromatic bass line (A-flat—A—B-flat) (Example 4). I interpret an ECP present in the large-scale tonal structure of Schubert's setting of *Der Erlkönig*. Typically, the progression of an ECP is I^6—ii (or IV)—V—I, with the bass solfege reading $\hat{3}$—$\hat{4}$—$\hat{5}$—$\hat{1}$. In *Der Erlkönig*, the ECP is prefigured in the opening motive and symbolizes the inevitability of death— specifically, the death of the child at the end of Goethe's poem.

Example 4: the opening of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Op. 31, No. 3*, with the notes that show the ascending bass motion (A-flat, A, and B-flat)

The idea of death as un underlying metaphor in Schubert's music is not limited to *Der Erlkönig*. In fact, this occurs in an 1828 song cycle of Schubert's called *Schwanegesang* (Swan Song). At this point in his life, Schubert was convinced that he was going to die soon. Indeed he

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[13] William Earl Caplin, *Analyzing Classical Form an Approach for the Classroom* (Brantford, Ontario: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2016), 374.
[14] Ludwig van Beethoven. Piano Sonata No. 18, Op. 31, No. 3. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, n.d.

passed away that year due to complications from syphilis.[15] One specific song in that cycle, "Der Atlas", also deals with the inevitability of death.[16]

In the text from poet Heinrich Heine, Atlas is described as being extremely unhappy. Recognizing his hubris as his downfall, Atlas resigns himself to a life filled with despair. Although Atlas does not die in the poem, the inevitability of Schubert's impending death is tonally concealed within the key scheme. As shown in Example 5, the main tonal areas are G minor, B major, and G minor. G minor, the key of inevitability in Schubert's Erlking setting, is again used here. Instead of the Erlking using the major key sections of this piece to entice the boy, the B major section in "Der Atlas" does not contribute to his happiness, and he notes that he will never be truly happy. Interestingly, the key signature never changes, with Schubert choosing instead to write in the accidentals. This adds to the inevitability of the key of G minor. At the end, the G minor section returns, just as it does in Schubert's setting of *Der Erlkönig*.

G minor	B major	G minor
mm. 1— 19	mm. 20—39	mm. 40—56

Example 5: The key structure of Schubert's *Der Atlas*.

The concept of inevitability permeates "Der Atlas," specifically when the key center returns to G minor. The piece begins and ends in G minor, much like *Der Erlkönig*. One

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[15] Elizabeth Norman McKay, *Franz Schubert: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 330.
[16] Franz Schubert, "Der Atlas," in *Schwanegesang,D. 957,* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1897).

difference between the two is that it lacks the number of key centers necessary to create a tonal-structure-embedded ECP.

The transition between the secondary key of B major and the original tonic can solidify the metaphorical significance of inevitability. In this instance, this concept is not found in the tonal structure but rather in the last few measures before the original tonic is confirmed by a PAC in m. 39. Just as the Erlking disguised his intentions through changes in the accompaniment and key areas, the progression that brings the original tonic back is forced by a non-diatonic chord in E minor. As the child inevitably breaks the Erlking's spell and sees his true form, the protagonist in "Der Atlas" snaps back to reality as he realizes that he will never truly be happy—perhaps the "happiness" he experienced in the second section of the piece was a lie.

Just before the transition, a key area in E minor from mm. 30—35 emerges, using the second key area as a massive dominant sonority. The chord in m. 36 is not native to the key of E minor. Instead of creating a smooth transition between the keys, Schubert has wedged a first inversion G minor chord to prompt a cadential progression leading to the aforementioned PAC. The progression reads: i—ii°—V—i. Example 6 shows the amount of time spent in the different key areas, and Example 6 shows the return to G minor.[17]

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[17] David Schwarz. "The Ascent and Arpeggiation in 'Die Stadt,' 'Der Doppelgänger,' and 'Der Atlas,' by Franz Schubert." *Indiana Theory Review* (1986). 9

Example 6: The transition from the E minor tonal area to the home key of G minor, mm. 34—43.

In *Der Erlkönig*, the Neapolitan chord is used twice: once to establish the Erlking's saccharine attitude toward the boy, and again at the end as part of the final cadential progression. As shown, every other time the Erlking sings, he is able to disguise his intentions well enough that the boy does not realize his true nature. The last time he sings, he does not switch keys— instead, he begins on the Neapolitan chord. At this point, his efforts are so transparent that he begins to show his true tonal colors.

In "Der Atlas," the Neapolitan can possibly evoke the inescapable (or inevitable) sadness of his life. In m. 50, there is a pseudo-Neapolitan sonority (see Example 7). The flat second scale degree emerges in the bass, but the other notes in the chord are not part of the ♭II triad. This sonority is not treated as a pre-dominant figure, nor is it a typical Neapolitan. In G minor, this chord could be spelled A-flat—C—E-flat, but the true sonority is A-flat—B-flat—D.

Functionally, it could make tonal sense if the chord went to VI (or E-flat major) since it outlines V_2^4/VI. Instead, the chord is used as nothing more than an upper neighbor sonority to the preceding tonic chord. If the B section's tonality is thought of as an upper neighbor as well (G—B—G), then this sonority could be thought of as relating back to that idea. With a tonic chord on either side, it can be read as G—A-flat—G. This is a more linear (or Schenkerian) perspective. Just as the main character in the song, this chord will never reach its true potential. Interestingly enough, there is no dominant chord after the chord in m. 50. In fact, the last true dominant sonority can be heard in m. 47. The F-sharps heard in the last few measures are more gestural and part of the recurring theme. Due to the fact that there is not another dominant chord after m. 47, the cadential progression actually stops at m. 48. The progression reads: i—ii°—V—i, with the final tonic being retained through m. 56 at the fermata since the Neapolitan gesture is nothing more than a chromatic upper neighbor to the tonic.

Example 7: The ending of "Der Atlas," showing the retained tonic through the Neapolitan gesture, mm. 49—56

Even in the opening measures of "Der Atlas," the recurring motive shown in Example 8 demonstrates the idea of inevitability. Instead of the inevitable key centers, this is an inevitable pitch—ironically, it is the same pitch as *Der Erlkönig*. The opening motive in the bass voice prominently features tonic in a unique way. After a tonic chord in m. 1, m. 2 begins on the leading tone. In a passage of mostly tonic sonorities, the leading tone would typically be placed on a weak beat—leading to tonic on the strong beat. With the leading tone placed on the strong beat, it seems as though a dominant sonority would follow, thus prolonging tonic. Instead, it is used as a lower neighbor, with the other pitches of the tonic triad—B-flat and D— remaining. This is immediately followed by a swift resolution to G. At the end of the motive, a quick D—G gesture is accompanied by a tonic triad, depriving the listener of any sense of a dominant sonority. The first dominant chord is not heard until m. 6— on the word "Atlas."

The first lines of text—*Ich unglücksel'ger Atlas!* (I, unhappy Atlas)— are repeated twice, with the second iteration's intervals stretched slightly. The first time this line is sung, it matches the opening motive, only spanning a minor sixth from the pickup note to the highest note—a B-flat. The second time, it spans an octave. Both times, the protagonist mentions that he is unhappy. Symbolically, even if the song changes pitches, the text is immutable. He is (and always will be) sad. Beginning in a pickup to m. 40, the "Unhappy Atlas" motive is sung again, this time transposed slightly (see Example 8). Sung twice, each iteration ends with the immutable tonic. The key difference between the two lies in the pickup notes. The first is on D, and the second is raised one half-step to E-flat. Again, this stretching idea leading to the same immovable tonic further demonstrates the concept of inevitability in Schubert's music. The difference between the inevitability in "Der Atlas" and *Der Erlkönig* is where it is found; the pitch "G" or the underlying tonal structure. Additionally, the F-sharp in the opening measures

could be an example of what R. Larry Todd calls an "unwelcome guest,"[18] or a fleeting, partially understood harmony.

Example 8: The transformation and stretching of the motive in "Der Atlas," mm. 1—8 (top), mm. 38—43 (bottom)

Although the other characters sing in different keys throughout the setting, the narrator exclusively sings in G minor. With the key centers represented in Example 2, the ECP can be read as me—fa—sol—do after the initial tonic. With the "inevitable" do at the beginning and end, the death of the boy at the end of the poem exists not only in the foreground, but also in the

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[18] R. Larry Todd, "The 'Unwelcome Guest' Regaled: Franz Liszt and the Augmented Traid," *19th-Century Music* 12, no. 2 (1988): pp. 93-115, https://doi.org/10.2307/746735, 106.

background structure— or *Ursatz,* as Schenker would call it. By drawing upon Caplin's Formal Function Theory as well as linear analysis, Schubert's setting has the clearest metaphorical connection to the inevitability of death. In the two arrangements by Loewe and Mayer, similar tonal movements can be heard.

Just as the Erlking sings predominately in the major mode throughout Schubert's setting, Loewe's Erlking sings similarly in the major mode. In fact. Nancy Rogers refers to the Erlking's singing in Loewe's arrangement as a siren song, attempting to lure the child to his inevitable death.[19] Assuming that a siren would sing the same (or at least similar) song every time, it makes sense that Loewe's Erlking sings not only in the major mode, but mostly in one triad— G major. This ensures that every time the Erlking is heard, he is unmistakable. When the Erlking first begins to sing, the time signature changes from 9/8 to 6/8. Since both of these time signatures are in triple time, the difference is not jarring. Just as the Erlking seeks to entice the boy and alter his perception of the surroundings, he alters time when he first enters. Although the Erlking does not alter time at every entrance, it is sufficient that he changes it only the first time. This situation would be most akin to gaslighting— the child would have no idea what is real and what is not. As the father attempts to calm him down, the boy only becomes more confused. In the Mayer setting, the Erlking is given a slightly different voice and abilities.

In Emilie Mayer's setting, the Erlking's song is repetitive, but in a different way. Instead of limiting him to a single triad, Mayer gives him a bit more melodic freedom and has him repeat a set melody. This way, the Erlking is just as recognizable without needing to worry about the

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[19] Ibid., 34

stagnation of a single triad. Even though the Erlking does not alter the meter in this setting, the accompaniment pattern does change when he enters, as shown in Example 9.

Example 9: The first appearance of the Erlking in Mayer's setting: mm. 35—40

The pattern goes from a semi-frantic sixteenth pattern (reminiscent of Schubert's setting) to a more harp-like arpeggiated motion that is much more calm. Since the Erlking is trying to lure the boy away from his father, the shift in accompaniment helps him achieve his goal. Just as Orpheus had the power to entrance others with his song, so does the Erlking. Although the Erlking does not possess a lyre, he is still able to sing sweetly as a siren in order to put the boy into a trance. When the father continuously fails to calm the boy, the Erlking is there with his song to relax him.

Schubert's setting allows the Erlking to shine in a way that the others do not, portraying him as a sort of chameleon. Without any restrictions to melodies or triads to hinder his progress, he is able to blend into any situation in order to achieve his ultimate goal of killing the boy. With this ever-changing song, Schubert has created a character that is not only terrifying, but also

realistic. Mayer's setting fuses the Erlking's song in order to gaslight the child, rather than rely on being incognito.

There are no alterations of the time signature, but the change in the accompaniment pattern at the point of the Erlking's entrance does provide a slight difference. Beginning at m. 38, triplets in the left hand of the piano part interact with the eighth notes in the vocal line, creating a hemiola effect. This effect adds to the gaslighting atmosphere that the Erlking seeks to confuse the boy; it is subtle, but effective. When the Erlking stops singing, the frantic sixteenths reemerge at m. 46 when the child seemingly snaps out of his trance. The inevitability of the child's death can also be interpreted through the lens of form in these settings.

The form of Schubert's setting closely follows the poem with little repetition. One repetition occurs when the Erlking tells the boy that his daughters will dance and sing for him. As Example 10 shows, this simple repetition acts as a pseudo-coda for the sentence between mm. 87—96. The theme type here could be analyzed a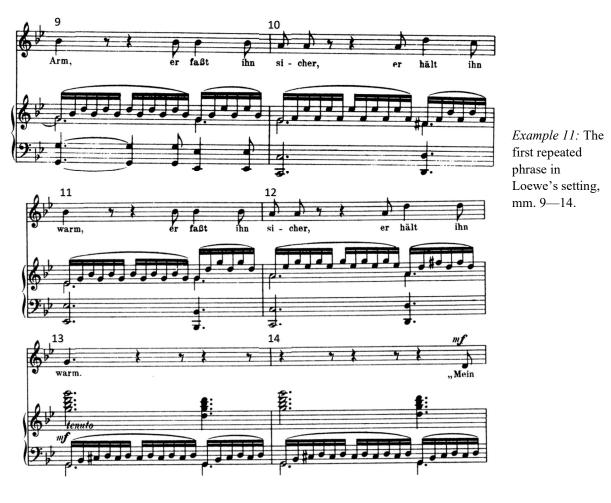s a sentence in Caplin's Formal Function Theory. The first two measures represent the presentation phrase, with two one-measure basic ideas. The continuation portion follows with secondary dominants for both the submediant and dominant chords. The eight-measure sentence could end with no qualms at m. 94, but the second half of the continuation is repeated from m. 94—96. This line in particular is stretched as if to emphasize how long the daughters will dance. The overarching form of Schubert's setting is strophic, following the stanzas of the poem closely. If the child is not to die until after the daughters finish dancing, it appears that the Erlking wishes to put off his inevitable death—perhaps to prolong his suffering.

Example 10: The only repeated line in Schubert's setting, mm. 92—98

Repetition in the Loewe arrangement serves to emphasize certain points, rather than contribute to the notion of inevitability. For example, the first repetition is at the very beginning, as the narrator describes how the father holds the child. This emphasis is well-placed, as this repeated phrase is given a stronger cadence the second time around. In G minor, the first cadence is deceptive (DC), with V resolving to VI. Upon repetition, it concludes with an authentic cadence (PAC). As shown in Example 11, this parallels the safety and security with which the father holds his son. Other examples of strategic repetition can be seen in the Mayer setting. Even without a direct relation to the ECP found in Schubert's setting, there are important ties to inevitability. The large-scale ECP, the focal point of this paper, will be discussed in tandem with analysis from the other two settings.

CHAPTER THREE: COMBINATORY ANALYSIS

Example 11: The first repeated phrase in Loewe's setting, mm. 9—14.

Aside from the large-scale ECP in Schubert's setting, other links to the inevitable death of the child can be found. The second major key change to B-flat major that occurs when the Erlking first enters in m. 57 serves two main purposes. Firstly, a higher key helps to accentuate the Erlking's high tessitura without unnecessarily straining the vocalist. This is not done by solely raising the pitches— the highest pitch up to m. 57 is ironically sung by the narrator (G4), who has one of the lowest tessituras of all of Goethe's characters in this setting. Secondly, the Erlking's higher tessitura helps him to avoid being discovered as a villain. In some lineage, villains/evildoers have lower voices, but Schubert has subverted this convention in order to portray the Erlking's false promises. Throughout, the Erlking promises the child many things, such as spending time with his daughters, clothing made by his mother, and beautiful flowers[20].

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[20] Franz Schubert. *Der Erlkönig, Op. 1*. Vienna: Diabelli & Cappi, n.d.

In addition to his false promises and high vocal register, the Erlking is also the only character in the setting to make use of vocal ornamentation. Other grace notes are sung by the narrator, but the most adorned line (as seen in Example 12) is sung by the Erlking in his first address to the boy in m. 64 on the word *spiele*, meaning "game". The playfulness of this line somewhat disguises the Erlking's true intentions.

Example 12: The turn which marks the most ornamented line in Schubert's setting, mm. 63—65.

Schenker might argue that a hierarchical view of music benefits both the musician and the analyst[21] by giving certain pitches in musical compositions structural priority. [22] Despite his personal bias and racist ideology, some aspects of linear analysis can prove useful here. [23] I apply linear analysis as an analytical tool to reveal the deep level ECP in Schubert's setting of *Der Erlkönig*.
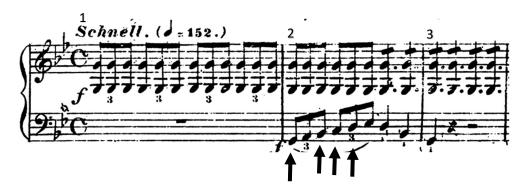
Graphic linear analysis typically uses dotted, dashed, and solid lines along with stemmed and non-stemmed notes to interpret which pitches operate at various levels of tonal structure in a work. Here, I focus on the ways in which the key areas are linked throughout the composition to serve as a metaphor for the inevitability of death.

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[21] Allen Cadwallader, William Pastille, and Heinrich Schenker, "Schenker's High-Level Motives," *Journal of Music Theory* 36, no. 1 (1992): p. 119, https://doi.org/10.2307/843912, 143.

[22]Schenkerian Analysis is sometimes referred to as Linear Analysis. This serves two purposes: reinforcing the idea that lines are used to show the connections (background and foreground) between notes, and also to show that not all of Schenker's ideologies have transferred into the field.

[23] Philip A. Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame," *Music Theory Online* 26, no. 2 (2020): pp. 1-29, https://doi.org/10.30535/mto.26.2.4, 7.

One of the earlier articles to mention *Der Erlkönig* and Schenker was Charlies Burkhart's 1978 article, *"Schenker's 'Motivic Parallelisms'".* Although the focus of the article is on tracing the relationships between repeated themes, the later section on Schubert's *Der Erlkönig* is also enlightening. The opening motive seen in Example 1 is the first musical motive Burkhart discusses. He mentions that Schubert uses some of its pitches as supplemental tonic pitches[24]. Example 13 shows the metrically accented notes in the opening motive.

Example 13: The opening motive in Schubert's setting prefigures the key centers of the piece

Through these metrically accented notes, the motivic cell of the large-scale ECP emerges. The underlying structure could be interpreted as (Example 14) G and its upper third (B-flat), C and its upper third (E-flat), and a tonic triad (D—B-flat—G). In this graph, the G at the beginning and end of the motive are connected. As structural pillars of the motive, the two G's could prefigure the large-scale G's that bookend the structure of Schubert's *Erlkönig*.

Example 14: A linear analysis of the opening motive in Schubert's setting

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[24] Ibid, 157.

Colloquially, each time the key changes, the focal character switches between the father and the Erlking. For example, the aforementioned key change from G minor to B-flat major shows the father singing from mm. 51–54. By the time the Erlking begins in m. 57, the key of B-flat has been established with the help of an eight-measure "standing on the dominant"[25]. In mm. 80—85, the father sings while beginning the transition from B-flat major to C major via B minor. When the Erlking reenters in m. 86, C major has been established through a cadential progression (iii—vi^6—V^7/V—V). In the final key change before the reprise of G minor, a key change occurs again while the father is singing (mm. 105–112). In the same manner as the previous key change, Schubert utilizes a chromatically-inflected key area a passing motion between two tonal goals (C—C-sharp—D)). Rather than proceed from I (C-sharp minor) to VI, he transforms the VI chord into a V^7/ii, leading to D minor. The final key change to the inevitable key of G minor is the only one led by the son.

In mm. 123—131, the child sings about how the Erlking has harmed him. Although there are different chords throughout this section, the skeletal basis consists of a ii°—V—I motion, which begins as soon as the boy begins singing. Once the narrator takes over in m. 132, the home key returns just before the child dies, thereby substantiating the metaphorical correspondence between Schubert's key areas and the unavoidable death of the son. Example 15 shows the transition back to G minor.

The narrator, who only sings at the beginning and end of the piece, is the figure of inevitability in this story. As he sets the scene at the start, he already knows how the story ends–a seemingly omniscient narrator. Furthermore, since his presence is tonally linked to G minor, he could also be interpreted as omnipresent– the past, present, and future's inevitable harbinger of

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[25] A term from Caplin meaning an extension of dominant harmony, usually following a half cadence.

death. The overarching tonal narrative starts and ends in the home key. Indeed, for most other

stories, the inevitable tonal closure may not transcend its large-scale cadential role. However, in

this narrative, the inescapable clutch of death emerges in other ways as well.

Example 15: The return of G minor, ushered in by the son with the cadential progression highlighted, mm. 125—134

After the final key change, one last detour from the inevitability of G minor occurs—

when the father and son finally arrive at their destination, they arrive tonally at the Neapolitan

chord (A-flat major). An unexpected major sonority, this briefly takes the focus away from tonic

while teasing a last-minute key change. Instead, Schubert utilizes this as a pivot in order to shift

back to the home key.

In mm. 132—139, the narrator is tonally static. Prolonging nothing but a G minor

sonority, the listener is left to assume that there is nothing left. Instead, the narrator switches to a

C minor chord (iv), beginning a mostly chromatic run up to the submediant. With a more

ambiguous tonal center, the listener is left to feel the same as the child— unsure of what is going

to happen next. Although the pitch A-flat is close to G, the key signatures are far apart, making it

a slightly farther motion with respect to key areas. Instead, Schubert uses the Neapolitan as it is

26

typically used—as a predominant chord. Just before the recitative in m. 146, the chord is put into first inversion.

By placing the Neapolitan chord in first inversion, he has effectively linked this transition to the others by way of a chromatic ascent. Example 16 shows this motion, and Example 17 is a linear analysis of the last three measures. Just as he used B minor and C-sharp minor as passing motions between tonal goals, he uses a first inversion chord to facilitate another transition. With the C on the bottom of the chord, the line becomes C—C-sharp—D leading back to the inevitable G minor chord. Not only do these two voices chromatically lead to the last chord, but they also converge in contrary motion.

Example 16: The chromatic ascent at the end of Schubert's setting, mm. 140—148.
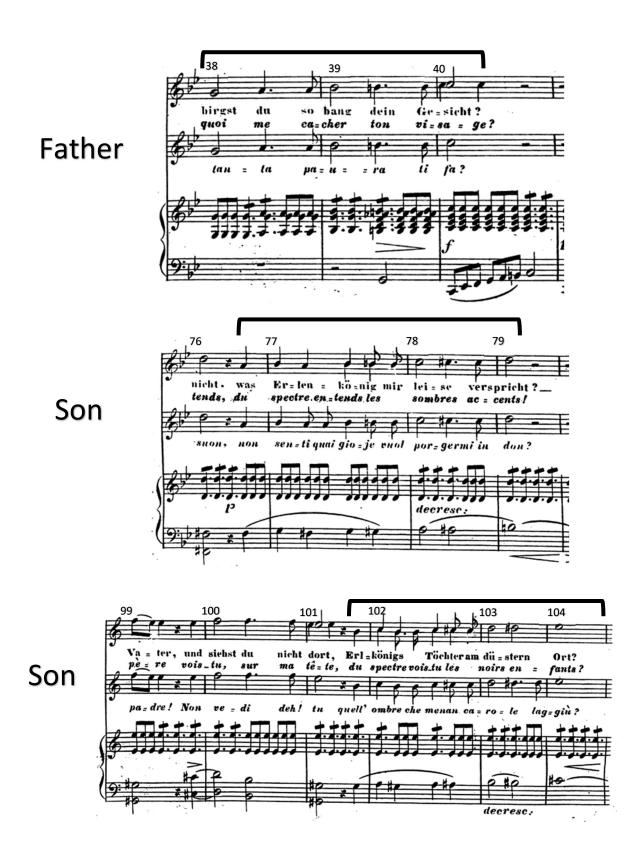
Example 17: A Schenkerian graph showing the convergence of the
treble and bass lines, mm. 145—148.

In addition to this convergence in the piano, we also see that the father and son mimic each other's vocal lines throughout this setting. When the father first starts singing in m. 36, he asks his son why he is hiding his face. During much of the song, the father is the seeming voice of rationality, carefully dismissing the son's fears as normal occurrences, just as any parent might. In this line, his pitch rises as if his anxiety is increasing. The son follows suit in m. 72 with another ascending chromatic line, asking if the father hears what the Erlking whispers to him. The father's four ascending chromatic pitches match the boy's five, raising the anxiety even higher (Example 18). The son also sings five chromatically ascending pitches in m. 102, when he sees the Erlking's daughters. The harmonic rate of change and the boy's pitch also rises throughout the setting, denoting the child's ever-increasing fear of the Erlking.

There is some chromaticism in the Erlking's vocal lines, but not to the extent that the others do. His chromaticism seems to mainly serve to connect some of his pitches, enabling him to effortlessly glide between pitches. Ultimately, those lines could contribute to the eerily smooth sound in the song, which might represent a nod to his supernatural origins.

Example 18: The ascending chromatic lines passed between the father and son.

Once the Erlking enters in m. 57, sets himself apart from the other characters. For example, he sings longer than the others (except for the narrator) have up until that point in the work. The narrator's eighteen bars narrowly beats the Erlking's sixteen. In some views, the narrator may also be perceived as a supernatural presence, since he is presented as omniscient. The major difference between the two characters is that the Erlking pursues the child while the narrator watches the events unfold from a rhetorical distance.

The Erlking displays the most emotion out of all of the characters in Schubert's setting. From his very first line—*Du liebes kind (you lovely child)*— he immediately makes his feelings known. The child becomes increasingly panicked (his pitch rising as well), and the father remains calm (assuming that his child is worrying over nothing). As his goal is to take the son away from his father, he attempts to pull the child away by telling him of all the nice things he and his mother have, such as golden robes and games. Subsequently, the child's pitch ascends by one step (see Example 19). The child does not just tell the father who is pursuing him, but he also describes the Erlking's dress—*mit kron und schweif (with crown and train)*—giving credence to the fact that what the boy sees is real.

Example 19: The rise in pitch of the son's voice, mm. 38—42 (top) and mm. 71—75.

Just as in the Mayer setting, the Erlking's accompaniment pattern changes once he enters. Until that point, the main accompaniment has consisted of a repeated eighth note ostinato in the right hand and the recurring motive that first appears at the beginning of the composition. After his entrance, the pattern becomes less unrelenting. Instead of the repeated eighth note figure, a different pattern emerges: a triplet figure.

However, this figure does not stay the same every time the Erlking enters. Each time, just as the Erlking changes his song, the accompaniment patterns change as well. Just as the death of the son is inevitable, so is the Erlking's ultimate goal: to steal the son away from the father. With each entrance, the accompaniment pattern becomes closer to the original pattern, as if the Erlking is learning how to mimic the existing contrapuntal paradigm in order to calm the child.

As Example 20 shows, the first pattern starting in m. 58 is a triplet figure split between the left and right hands of the pianist. The second pattern begins in m. 87. This time, the pattern is still triplet-based, but there are no rests in the right-hand part, bringing it slightly closer to the original unrelenting eighth notes. The final pattern is the most closely related to the original in m. 117, with the Erlking's accompaniment pattern becoming repeated eighth notes. Rather than

octaves, this pattern repeats full chords. Just as the Erlking is able to change his song, he is also able to change the accompaniment pattern for his song.
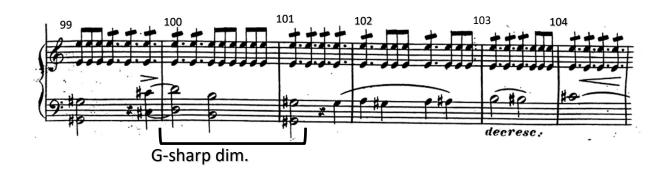

Example 20: The Erlking's changing accompaniment patterns throughout Schubert's setting.

Just as the Erlking's song changes throughout Schubert's setting, the child becomes more panicked. Each cry of *"Mein Vater"* (my father) is higher-pitched, but the accompaniment also rises with each iteration of the boy's song. In m. 73, the child calls out to his father for the first
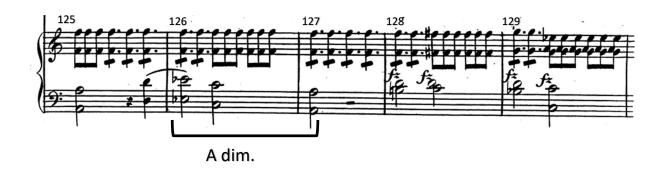
time. The accompaniment at this point outlines an F-sharp diminished triad. The second time the

child attempts to alert his father to the Erlking's evil in m. 98, the accompanying triad has risen a

whole step to a G-sharp diminished triad. The final permutation of the triads (m. 124) moves up

a half step to an A diminished triad (see Example 21). In the end, the accompaniment as well as

the vocal line expresses the son's increasing distress.

This shift in tonality could be labeled as "expressive tonality," a concept realized by

Robert Bailey in 1977.[26] With each iteration of the ascending diminished arpeggios, a pattern

emerges. Specifically, a pattern that rises in pitch (like the one shown in the following example)

usually denotes increased stress or panic, such as that of the child in Schubert's setting.

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[26] Robert Bailey, "The Structure of the 'Ring' and Its Evolution," *19th-Century Music* 1, no. 1 (January 1977): pp. 48-61, https://doi.org/10.2307/746769, 51.

A dim.

Example 21: The son's rising
accompaniment patterns throughout
Schubert's setting.

The son's panic is temporarily assuaged by the father's calming presence. Although the

father is able to explain away the child's trouble, the reader/listener knows the truth: that the

Erlking is nearby. The façade of tranquility that the father tries to impart to his son, like many

aspects of this composition, goes deeper than the surface.

Just as the Erlking's accompaniment patterns change as he figures out how best to seduce

the boy, and the son's accompaniment patterns present ever-increasing descending diminished

triads, the father's pattern changes as well. Every time the father enters, the harmony becomes

immediately static, as if to reflect the father's placid state of mind. Interestingly, the eighth notes

in the right hand of the piano part persist, but without the sextuplet motive heard throughout this

setting.

The father's first entrance in m. 36 (Example 22) shows the persistent right hand eighth notes

with the omission of the sextuplet motive. The motive only comes back during the transition

from father to son. In his next entrance at m. 51, the father picks up where the son leaves off,

leaving the horse motive in the dust as the eighth note ostinato propels him into the Erlking's

entrance in m. 57. The following two entrances in mm. 80 and 105 show increased left harmonic

activity, perhaps giving credence to the idea that the father is starting to believe what his son is

experiencing. All the while, the ostinato eighth notes persist in the father's attempt to conceal his
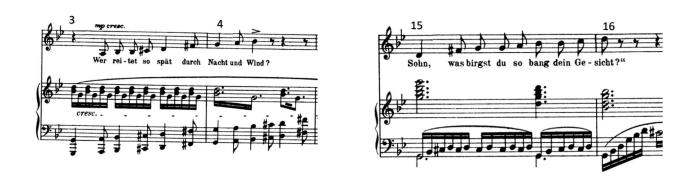
own fears and rising anxiety.

Example 22: The father's entrances in Schubert's setting, showing the change in his accompaniment patterns.
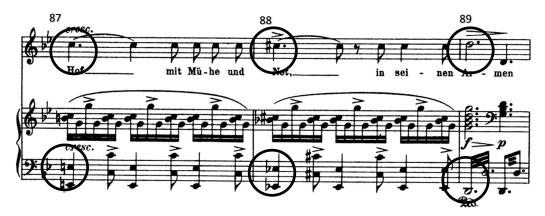
  The Erlking, father, and son all interact with one another in some way. The Erlking attempts to entice the son, the son tries to break away from the Erlking's enchantments, and the father tries to calm his son. The narrator is somewhat removed from the situation, merely reporting on the events as they unfold. The narrator immediately leaps into musical action in Loewe's setting, joining the piano in m. 3 in an ascending pattern that spans over two octaves! Almost as if to mimic the natural rising inflection of a question, the narrator's line rises as well. The more level-headed narrator in Schubert's setting presents a stark change from Loewe's,

which seems to be a part of the action. When the father enters in m. 14, he sings a very similar ascending vocal line. This time, it measures an octave exactly (Example 23)..

Example 23: The narrator's entrance in m. 3 (left) and the father's vocal line at m. 15, one bar after he enters (right).
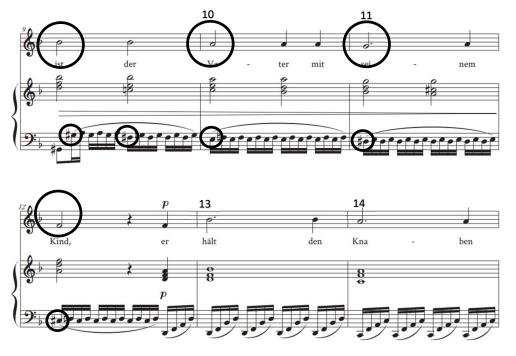
The narrator retains this energy in his second entrance at the end of Loewe's setting. With a motive taken from just before one of the Erlking's earlier entrances, the narrator's ascending vocal line in mm. 87—89 (C—C-sharp—D) contrasts with the bass voice in the piano (E—E-flat—D). This leads to a cadential 6/4 in m. 89, extending the dominant harmony from the existing German augmented sixth chord in the previous measure. The contrary motion typifies a popular Galant schema: the converging half cadence (Example 24).

Example 24: The narrator's vocal line in the Loewe setting from mm. 87—89, showing the contrary motion between the two parts.
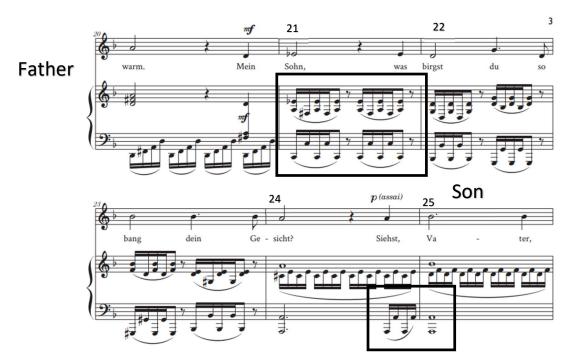
In the Mayer setting, the narrator begins their second phrase after the pickup note in m. 8 with a descending line from B-flat to F. Simultaneously, the bass line moves downward from G-sharp to C-sharp. This is mirrored by the narrator's last entrance, which shows an ascending line from A to E (similar to the father and narrator mirroring each other). Not only are the directions of the vocal lines reversed, but the intervals are flipped— a descending perfect fourth becomes an ascending perfect fifth. Interestingly, the chords that follow the first descending line only match up on offbeat sixteenth notes.

As Example 25 shows, Mayer is following a harmonic sequence from mm. 9–12. Here, the top note in the chord is retained for a full measure while the two notes below it move down a third. The sequence moves down by step starting in m. 9. The first chord in m. 9 is the exception. The chord is notated as a fully diminished seventh chord based on G-sharp, but with a flat third. In order for the spelling of the chord to match its function, the G-sharp would need to be re-notated as its enharmonic— A-flat. By reordering the chord with this new note, a B-flat dominant seventh chord emerges. When looking at the notes on strong beats, the following chord reads as F-sharp—E—G—B-flat. In order to properly analyze the chord, the offbeat sixteenths (G) must be counted in place of the F-sharp. This transforms the chord into E—G—B-flat, a diminished triad. The sequence ends just before m. 12, where the chords become tonally functional.

Example 25: The narrator's vocal line in Mayer's setting from mm. 9–14, showing the descending motion between the two parts.

In the pickup to m. 21, the father picks up where the narrator left off, asking the son why he hides his face. A recurring pattern of four sixteenths (potentially the father's theme, as it returns later in the setting) begins and continues through the son's reply in mm. 24—32. Although this pattern is brought to the forefront while the father is singing, it relegates itself to the background once the son begins to sing (Example 26). This shaking/shivering pattern returns in m. 78 (Example 27) when the father's buried nervousness starts to reveal itself. Perhaps the father is now starting to believe what his son has been telling him. The second time the pattern returns, a sequence of falling fifths emerges: A-flat—D—G—C—F—B-flat—E-flat.

Example 26: The change in accompaniment from father to son in mm. 20—25, showing the retention of the father's "theme" while the son sings.

Father

Example 27: The father's theme from mm. 76—84, showing the descending fifths sequence
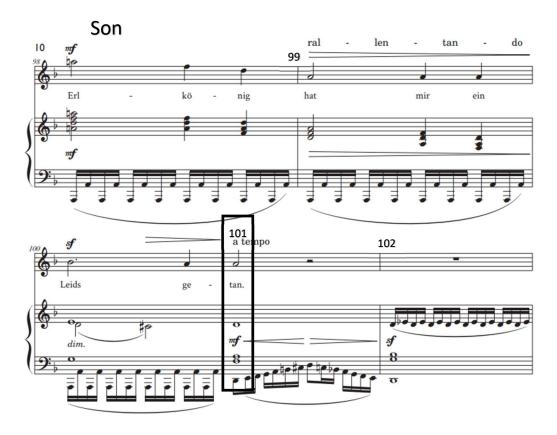
At m. 93, the Erking finally snaps and explains that he will take the boy by force if necessary. At this pivotal moment in the text, the music changes to reflect the child's futile attempt to escape the Erlking's clutches. The harp-like accompaniment for the Erlking is immediately changed when the child enters for the last time, panicked and screaming that the Erlking has actually grabbed him. The accompaniment switches from the calm, arpeggiated chords to sixteenth notes. The contrary motion between the sixteenth notes seems to represent the pull between the child and the Erlking— as if to say that the child is fighting until his last breath. The crescendo that begins in m. 90 helps to set off this change (Example 28).

Example 28: The transition from the Erlking to the son in mm. 89—94 in the Mayer arrangement, showing the transformation of the accompaniment.

When the child begins his second phrase in m. 98, the accompaniment pattern once again changes (Example 29). What once were two ferocious adversaries dueling between sixteenth

note patterns are now a single repeated sixteenth note ostinato in only one voice, signifying the son's defeat at the hands of the Erlking. The opening material returns at m. 101 before the narrator enters at m. 106, building momentum to the fermata ten measures later.

Example 29: The son's second stanza in mm. 98-102, showing the change in accompaniment patterns from the son's first stanza and the return of the opening material in the piano part.
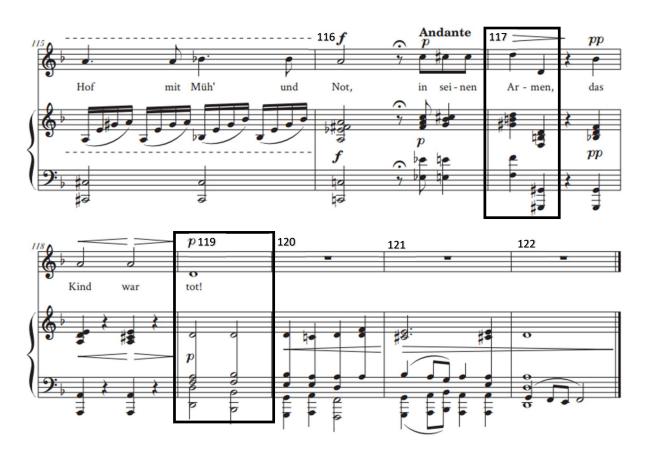
In the narrator's final entrance (m. 106), the accompaniment transforms from sixteenths to a triplet pattern, reminiscent of the piano part that accompanies the Erlking. Just before the father and son arrive at their destination, the accompaniment pattern changes once again— this time resembling the pattern that accompanied the Erlking when he killed the child. As shown in

Example 30, the two patterns almost serve as a recapitulation of past events, providing a sense of closure through the music. After the narrator announces the death of the child, a small three-measure coda ends the setting.

Example 30: The final bracketed change in accompaniment patterns in Mayer's setting, mm. 106—108 (top) and mm. 112—117 (bottom)

Through mm. 106—114, the narrator sings an ascending fifth from A to E. This gradual increase of pitch is presented alongside an accelerando, as the father and son attempt to safely avoid the Erlking's grip. After this stepwise ascent, a sudden octave drop is heard on the word "*armen* (arm)." This jarring interval choice represents a different type of inevitability: one of phrase. The word "*tot* (dead)." (at the same pitch), perhaps foreshadows the death of the child.

Example 31: The bracketed octave drop that foreshadows the death of the child along with the same pitch sung later, mm. 115—122

The octave skip seen earlier in the Mayer setting happens in Loewe's setting as well. Not only does this happen in the same place in the text, but on the exact same pitch and word—

Armen. The key difference between the two is that the inevitability of the same note is not present here, as the last note sung is a B instead of a D. The simultaneous tremolo in m. 89 on the word *Armen* adds to the sudden octave leap. After the fermata in m. 91, the tremolo pattern returns, ending the setting.

The last sung note, B, might at first glance seem like a Picardy third like some central European Baroque-era endings, but it is in fact a different chord. The B in this case is the note upon which a fully diminished seventh chord is built. The tonic pedal beneath this chord mars the quality a bit, making it sound like a dominant seventh chord built off of G with a minor ninth added to it (Example 32).

Example 32: The end of Loewe's setting, showing the octave drop and the addition of flat ^2, mm. 87—95
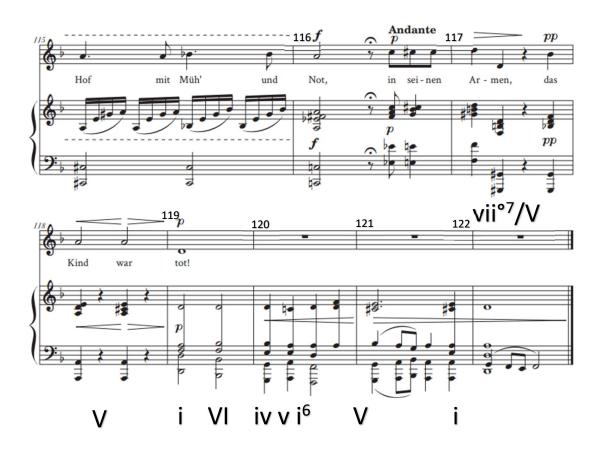
The progression at the end of Loewe's setting differs greatly from the progression that closes out the Mayer setting. The delayed resolution of the final cadence could be seen as symbolic— it is as ambiguous as the Erlking's existence has been for most of the setting. In my view, the dominant could occur at the fermata and the tonic on the final sonority (Example 33), giving the fermata the V and the final sonority i.

Example 33: The end of Loewe's setting, showing the almost reluctant resolution to tonic, mm. 90–95

Example 34 shows that the progression at the end of Mayer's setting is much more traditional, with a cadential progression that is easily identifiable. Staring on the word "*Armen,*" the progression reads: vii°^{7}/V—V—i. Measures 120—122 are a coda after the final cadence that features minor v as a steppingstone to major V, creating a chromatic motion from C—C-sharp—D. The immediate motion to VI in m. 119 initiates the coda as if to say "*I am not quite finished yet.*"

An accelerando in m. 135 (three measures after the narrator begins to sing for the last time) begins the ride to the end. Just as the Mayer setting had a crescendo of about eight bars, the final accelerando/crescendo lasts around 8-10 bars (depending on which recording one listens to). Set just before the father and son arrive at their destination, a tonic pedal can be heard between mm. 131—139. The pedal begins immediately following a perfect authentic cadence in m. 131. While there are some moments in the Mayer and Loewe settings that are subtle, this particular notion in Schubert's setting (Example 35) is much more in the forefront. This return to the inevitable G minor—save for the brief Neapolitan respite—denotes the Erlking's victory over the father and son.

Example 34: The end of Mayer's setting with Roman numeral analysis, mm. 115—122.

Example 35: The end of Schubert's setting showing the chromatic motion, mm. 145—148.

The end of Schubert's setting does not show any octave drops that foreshadow the inevitable end, nor does it end with a somewhat unsettled chord progression. The chromatic motion in the Mayer emerges in the last line of the Schubert. The final cadential progression from mm. 146—148 starts with a Neapolitan 6 chord. This sonority, beginning in m. 143, is a bit of a departure from what may have been expected (Example 33). In m. 141, a C minor chord presents what could be a simple progression. Starting with iv in G minor, it would read: iv—V— i. Instead, Schubert extends the progression with a chromatic pre-dominant chord: the Neapolitan. The chromatic motion from that point becomes C—C-sharp—D, leading to the V chord in m. 147. Unlike the other settings, the voice in Schubert's setting ends on ^5 instead of

Reflecting back on the Erlking's final song, a pattern emerges in how the Neapolitan chord is used. In m. 117–119, the Erlking stays on the same E-flat major sonority. This unexpected major sonority, especially after a strong PAC in m. 112, harkens back to the Erlking's saccharine attempts to win the boy's affection by singing sweetly in a major key. At this point in the setting, it is clear that the Erlking's intentions are not sweet at all, but nefarious. The first time he sings, the key changes to B-flat major. The second, it changes again to C major. This time, the key center has not shifted at all— a tonal trick from the trickster himself, perhaps. The tonic is still D minor (Example 36), with the Erlking sitting precariously on this Neapolitan sonority for three measures before hitting a C-sharp in m. 120. Right at the moment that the Neapolitan becomes a vii°, the Erlking reveals that he will take the boy by force if necessary. Although the cadential progression could have read N—V—i, it is extended; N—vii°—vii°/V—V—i. This extension not only delays the inevitable return of G minor in m. 131, but shows how the Erlking continuously manipulates time in order to further deceive the boy.

Example 36: The Erlking's final song, with the change in harmony bracketed, mm. 115–119 (top) and 120–124 (bottom)

Going back to the beginning, the narrator foreshadows the inevitability present in the structure of this setting. The chromatic motion that the narrator has in mm. 6–7 matches that shown in mm. 13–15. The only difference between the two is the harmonic rhythm which is stretched the second time. The first time it occurs, the progression reads as: ii—vii°^{7}/V—V—i. The second time it appears, the dominant sonority is extended by five measures. Even though the dominant gesture has been extended, there is a tonic chord in first inversion that appears just as the narrator begins to sing. The extension is twofold: once through harmonic rhythm and again via the dominant sonority. The first root position tonic chord after this progression does not appear until m. 29. This sets off a cadential progression that reads: i—VI—ii°—V—i. Example 37 shows the dominant extension in the second appearance of the ascending chromatic line.

Example 37: The extension of the narrator's chromatic line, mm. 6–8 (top) and mm. 13—16 (bottom).

By exploring the narrator's final cadences both times he sings, one can find another extension. The cadential progression takes place over three measures (mm. 30—32)(Example 38) the first time the narrator stops singing. The narrator's second cadence (and the final one in the setting) takes place after a lengthy cadential progression. In fact, this is another ECP! From mm. 132—148, it is one cadential progression. With the aforementioned extended Neapolitan chord and the accelerando that is held over a tonic pedal, the cadential progression is eight times longer. Even after a progression this long, there is always the return to the inevitable G minor.

Example 38: The narrator's original cadential progression, mm. 27—32.

CONCLUSION

The inevitability of death permeates all three of the aforementioned settings of *Der Erlkönig*. In Emilie Mayer's 1870 setting, this concept is found predominantly in the foreground, with clever accompaniment changes and other text painting mechanisms. With only surface-level connections to the idea of inevitability, In Carl Loewe's 1824 setting, the concept lies in the middleground— somewhere between Mayer and Schubert. This concept is reinforced by the fact that the piece is in the key of G for the duration of the setting. This tonic retention in two different harmonic worlds— both major and minor— relates to the duality of the Erlking. The Erlking wants to be perceived as a good person, but is actually evil. The strongest tie to inevitability lies in the background of Schubert's setting. The tonal structure of that piece contains an ECP that lays a roadmap leading to the child's demise. In essence, this ECP propels the listener to the end, where the text has already predicted the son's fate.[27]

This research could contribute to future conversations about death or the inevitability thereof. Schubert's *String Quartet No. 14 "Death and the Maiden"* would be a great place to start. At the time of composition, Schubert was slowly coming to terms with his own mortality. Equally interesting would be the analysis of Schubert's *Symphony No. 8*, famously not completed at the time of his death. Looking at other works that have different roles (such as characters pieces) could provide some interesting comparisons. Schumann's *Carnaval* could be a point of departure. A study on chromatic harmony and how it relates to text might also yield interesting results. The same techniques explored in this thesis, such as Formal Function Theory and linear analysis[28], can be integrated and applied to the study of large-scale forms— perhaps in

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[27] Along with the narrator, who only sings at the beginning and end of the piece

[28] Eric Wen, William Rothstein, Carl Schachter, and David Damschroder are great sources for linear analysis

other vocal works. Caplin's theory also works well with Hepokoski and Darcy's Sonata Theory, which uses very similar concepts in the analysis of musical form. The continuation of music research, much like the concept of death in *Der Erlkönig*, is inevitable.

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